



Products

In recent years, Mississippi farmers have provided bell peppers, blueberries, butterbeans, collard greens, cucumbers, eggplant, satsumas, southern peas, strawberries, and sweet potatoes to schools across the state. Additional produce is always open for consideration!

Educational Resources

Education is a key component to the Farm to School program. Society is becoming increasingly further away from agricultural practices, and it remains pertinent to educate students on where their food comes from and how it arrives on their plate three times a day!

Educational Resources can be found on the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce website, www.farmtoschoolweek.org

Farm To School Week

The first full week of October was designated as Mississippi Farm to School Week by the Mississippi Legislature. Schools across the state participate in a variety of farm to school activities and strive to serve produce from local farmers.

Farm to School Contacts

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & COMMERCE

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
Market Development Division
601-359-1159



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Ensuring a bright future for every child

Mississippi Department of Education
Office of Child Nutrition
601-576-4980



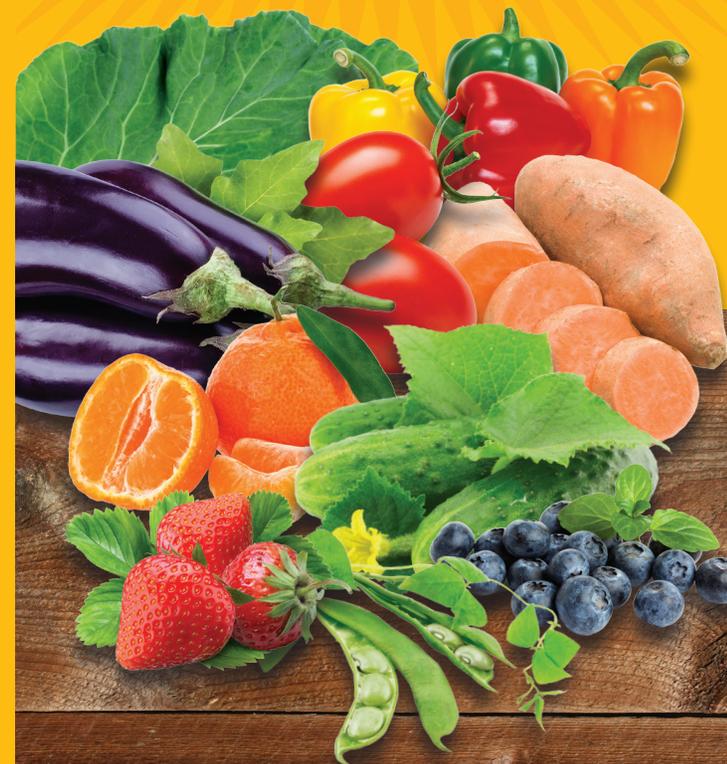
MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY

EXTENSION SERVICE

Mississippi State University Extension Service
662-325-2155

Mississippi Farm to School

Mississippi Grown. Mississippi Good.



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE
CINDY HYDE-SMITH, COMMISSIONER
WWW.FARMTOSCHOOLWEEK.ORG · WWW.MDAC.MS.GOV



What is Farm to School?

The Mississippi Farm to School program was introduced to encourage the serving of locally-grown and locally-produced agricultural products in school meals and to recognize the substantial economic and health benefits of serving locally-grown foods.

The program supports local farmers by creating additional marketing opportunities and avenues in which they can sell their product(s).

What are the benefits?

Benefits of the Farm to School program include:

- Supporting both local and state economies and development;
- Increasing market opportunities and avenues for growers;
- Increasing volume and varieties of fruits and vegetables offered in school lunchrooms;
- Increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables among students;
- Developing relationships between schools, parents, and farmers; and
- Increasing knowledge of agriculture, food, and nutrition.

For growers:

How can I participate?

Farmers can participate in Farm to School by:

1. Supplying produce to the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

For more than a decade, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) have worked in conjunction to assist growers wishing to participate in the Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. This is a statewide purchasing program administered by the two agencies. School districts place orders for produce throughout the year, and MDAC works with the growers to ensure the produce is delivered to the appropriate distributor. The distributor is then responsible for delivering the produce to the schools. Farmers are required to obtain Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) certification in order to participate in this program.

2. Working directly with local school districts

Growers can also work directly with the local school district's food purchasing director or nutrition director. This is a great way for growers on a smaller scale to get produce into local school systems!

Things to consider:

Register your farm with Mississippi MarketMaker at www.marketmaker.msstate.edu; schools and other potential customers will know what you have to offer.

Typically, growers are responsible for transporting the produce from the farm to the school or food distributor. Growers should be prepared to discuss produce availability, feasibility, and seasonality with food purchasing directors or nutrition directors.

For schools:

How do I purchase produce for my school?

Schools can participate in one of two ways:

1. Schools participating in the Department of Defense (DoD) purchasing program can choose to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from Mississippi farmers. If there is something you do not see on the DoD purchasing guide, but you wish to order, take a look at Mississippi MarketMaker www.marketmaker.msstate.edu to search for produce from local growers.
2. School purchasing directors or nutrition directors can also work directly with growers to acquire fresh fruits and vegetables. Take a look at Mississippi MarketMaker www.marketmaker.msstate.edu to search for produce from local growers. Please keep in mind that not all produce is available for the entire school year.

Procurement

Schools and other organizations that wish to procure locally-grown, minimally-processed products should keep in mind that USDA regulations do require schools to use good procurement practices under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. While there are provisions made for geographic preferences, quotes for purchases under \$150,000 and formal solicitation for purchases over \$150,000 are required.

For more information regarding procurement requirements, please feel free to contact the Office of Child Nutrition at 601-576-4980. Organizations may also visit www.marketmaker.msstate.edu to view a sample procurement template.